DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 441 SP 030 981

AUTHOR Wasserman, Susan; Emery, Donna
TITLE Issues in Beginning Teacher Support.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; *College School Cooperation; *Collegiality; Elementary Secondary Education; Helping Relationship; Inservice Teacher Education; Program Development; *Teacher Orientation
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Teacher Induction

ABSTRACT

Because there is a great need for support of new teachers, the Department of Elementary Education, California State University, Northridge, developed a Beginner Teacher Support Program: Help Line, with the objective of easing the induction period for new teachers. This paper describes the main elements of the program called Model I, and a proposed program of new teacher support, called Model II. Both models are built on the assumption that new teacher support must be responsive to the context where actual teaching takes place, and that support must be responsive to the needs expressed by the new teacher. The two models differ in that Model I is based on the concept that university and school district collaboration should be limited because the success of a support program is based on collegiality and trust. Therefore, support functions must be separated from the hierarchical and evaluation functions of the local schools. Model II, however, is based on the idea that full university and school district collaboration is necessary and that the hierarchical and evaluative functions of local schools can be balanced with support functions. Following descriptions of the two models, a discussion is presented on the merits of the two kinds of support functions. (JD)

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# ISSUES IN BEGINNING TEACHER SUPPORT

Susan Wasserman

Donna Emery

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SP030981

# Issues in Beginning Teacher Support

Susan Wasserman
Donna Emery
California State University, Northridge

We in California are currently experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers with the prospects of an increasing deficit to come. This may be due to the complexity of urban schools of today, Tremendous demands are placed upon every teacher; these demands often seem insurmountable to the beginning teacher. "Reality shock" best describes the rude awakening experienced by even the best prepared new teacher, dampening enthusiasm and causing self-doubts and low morale. One day the novice is a university student, guided in a well-supervised teacher preparation program, and the very next day, the first year teacher has the same duties and responsibilities assumed by 15-30 year veteran teachers.

So overwhelming are the demands and problems experienced by these beginning teachers that 40-50% leave the teaching profession in their first five years. Even more startling are the statistics evidencing that in some inner-city school districts, 30% of beginning teachers resign before Christmas of their first teaching year.

Many beginning teachers are assigned to schools with an enrollment of predominantly low income, minority and/or language different children. These schools may have a multitude of government sponsored programs. Competency to meet all the necessary aspects of these programs is difficult for even the most

committed and experienced of teachers let alone for a first or second year practitioner.

To stem the tide of those leaving the profession and to provide support for the continued development of teachers, models of new teacher support programs are being considered all over the country. There are fifteen model teacher induction programs being conducted currently in the State of California to help retain new teachers. Many of these programs involve collaboration between universities and public schools and all involve the development of teachers in public school settings. Another example of this trend is the major research program on university and public school collaboration in student teaching, teacher induction and teacher inservice; the Research in Teacher Education program is being conducted at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at The University of Texas at Austin (Hoffman & Edwards, 1986).

Cognizant of this great need for support of new teachers, in the 1985-1986 school year, the Department of Elementary Education, California State University, Northridge developed a Beginner Teacher Support Program: Help Line with the objective of easing the induction period for both graduates of the Teacher Preparation Program and the Emergency Credential teachers. The latter group of teachers, armed with a B.A. but often lacking education coursework including student teaching, are expected to become instant teachers, competent to overcome the most complex of school problems.

This paper will describe the main elements of the existing Beginner Teacher Support Program: Help Line, called model I and a proposed program of new teacher support, called model II. Both of these models are based on two common assumptions concerning new teacher support. These assumptions are that new teacher support must be responsive to the context where actual teaching takes place. Secondly, new teacher support must be responsive to the needs expressed by the new teacher her/himself, since these needs will differ depending upon individual differences in their professional development.

The two models of new teacher support differ in that model I is based on the concept that university and school district collaboration should be limited because the success of a support program is based on collegiality and trust. Therefore support functions must be separated from the hierarchical and evaluation functions of the local schools. Model II, however is based on the idea that full university and school district collaboration is necessary and that the hierarchical and evaluation functions of local schools can be balanced with support functions.

New Teacher Support must be responsive to the context of teaching: Both models of new teacher support described in this paper ascribe to the notion that these programs must be responsive to the context of the local school and the needs of the teacher within that school. There are a number of reasons for this need. First, the responsibility of a new teaching assignment provides an

excellent setting for developing the ability to teach. University teacher training programs are limited in that teaching is done in a somewhat hypothetical mode. Students discuss, write about, simulate and even "practice" teaching, but do not actually have the responsibility of teaching as they will when they enter their own classroom.

Learning to teach in the hypothetical mode may be a little like learning to "think critically" in the abstract. The problem of course is that it is only possible to think critically about SOMETHING. By the same logic, we cannot actually perform the act of teaching in the hypothetical. We must teach SOMETHING to SOMEONE in A CONTEXT. While these hypothetical teaching exercises may develop a common vocabulary, raise some pertinent issues and provide a knowledge base for future application, the demands of actually teaching in that first classroom assignment offers unique and powerful opportunities for teacher development.

Secondly, not only is development of teaching <u>performance</u> necessarily tied to a specific context, but it is possible that the development of <u>knowledge</u> about instruction may only develop fully within a contextual situation. Roehler, Duffy, Conley, Herrmann, Johnson and Michelson (1987) concluded that teacher expertise in exhibiting expert-like knowledge structures about reading instruction is related to the degree that methods courses are integrated with field experiences. Furthermore, Duffy, Roehler and Johnson (1986) suggest university methods instructors have underestimated the amount of time that teachers must spend actually

using teaching strategies in their classrooms before these strategies are understood well enough to become a regular part of their pedagogical repertoire. Legislatures and state boards of education may really be the culprits by curtailing the number of units allowed in a teacher preparation program.

A third and less optimistic reason for a new teacher program to be responsive to the context of teaching is that new teachers are sometimes embedded in destructive situations. These situations make it extremely difficult for the teacher to do a good job as a teacher. Commonly listed as causes for teacher burnout are student discipline and school violence, multiple but conflicting expectations, class size, too wide a variance in abilities, languages and cultures, lack of status and difficult staff relations (Dworkin, 1987; Dunham, 1984). Upon reading this list of teaching difficulties in today's schools, one wonders why 50-60% of entering teachers remain in the profession after five years, rather than why 40-50% leave. If school contexts are necessary for helping teachers develop, it is also necessary that these issues be addressed.

Ideally, a new teacher support program is not one that merely attempts to help teachers accommodate to the context in which they find themselves, but also helps them to develop the ability to affect the system as well. The most destructive contexts to teachers are those where the teachers are not heard and feel that they are merely cogs in a wheel whose direction is beyond their control (Griffin, 1986).

New Teacher Support must be responsive to the needs expressed by the teacher her/himself: Responsiveness to actual needs expressed by new teachers is thought to be important because it is likely that new teachers vary greatly in professional development. Haberman (1983) suggests that students develop along a continuum during their professional laboratory experience. His students began by demonstrating a ritualistic-imitative mode of thinking in stage one. During this stage they were focused on following teaching methods exactly as they had been taught. They progressed to a reality-centered approach in state two, where they became extremely concerned about the crises of the moment. Next, they progressed to thinking in terms of a learning skills director. Here they focused on the easiest aspects of teaching, that of managing lower level learning. During his stage four, they became self-evaluators and were open to change. From this they developed to the final two stages of insightful analyst and finally professional decision maker. It is during these final three stages where it is finally possible for the hypotheticals of the university teaching program to be understood in light of the realities of the classroom.

Whether Haberman's stages prove to be useful categories of teacher development or not, it is clear that a beginning teacher's way of thinking about themselves as teachers and their students as learners changes markedly over time. Other research indicates that preservice teachers emerge from the final phases of their

preparation with deficiencies in subject matter knowledge and little confidence in curriculum tasks and evaluation competencies (Koehler, 1985). Studies also indicate that these knowledge bases change as teachers develop (Wilson & Shulman, 1987; Herrman, 1987; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1986) and that more complex knowledge bases are associated with more finely differentiated teaching behaviors (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986).

Given differences in the professional development of new teachers, an essential feature of Model I, the Beginning Teacher Support Program: Help Line, is that the new teacher has to ask for help in order to receive it. In most collaborative efforts the district chooses which new teachers will receive help and plans the content of that help based on their beliefs of the new teachers' needs. It was hoped that by providing the opportunity to ask for help, the new teacher would be more receptive to the help; further, the program would be more responsive to the actual needs of each individual. Further, by beginning the involvement at the request of the new teacher, the opportunity exists to provide additional support for professional development as well.

Model I: Beginning Teacher Support: Help Line: A Limited Collaboration Model of New Teacher Support: Both Models I and II are designed to be responsive to the context of teaching and responsive to the needs expressed by the teacher her/himself. However, Model I differs from Model II in that it is based on the notion that new teacher support must be built on trust and

collegiality and must therefore be separated from the hierarchical and evaluation function of local schools. All would agree that new teacher development is built on a sense of trust and collegiality. A number of programs throughout the country, such as the Mentor Teacher Program in California and the peer coaching encouraged by many inservice programs have been praised for building a sense of collegiality and professionalism. Further, these approaches are considered to be especially helpful for new teachers who have reported feelings of isolation and powerlessness to affect change (Dworkin, 1987; Dunham, 1984).

It is a basic tenant of the counseling profession, whose success is dependent upon developing a sense of trust, that people will not seek help if they perceive that the person helping them has the power to threaten them in any way. Therefore, persons in the local school hierarchy who could pose a threat to the beginning teacher due to their evaluative function may not be the best source of support for the new teacher. It has been demonstrated that teachers have successfully established trusting, collegial relationships with other teachers and those outside of the evaluation hierarchy.

Model I, the Beginning Teacher Support Program: Help-Line is in its fourth year of operation at California State University, Northrige. The program involves a cadre of thirty retired teachers and principals who are matched with one or more new teachers. It is proposed that cadre members are successful in building a sense of trust and collegiality because they are outside of the hierarchy

of the local schools, but are available to deliver support at the school site. Further, they are able to understand the local context since most of them have spent a number of years working within the public schools in the area.

The existing program also includes after school workshops, release days to observe in schools, and a monthly newsletter. An additional aspect of this program is the Beginning Teacher Help-Line message center where any beginning teacher in the area can call to ask for help on matters that concern them. This provides a system that is responsive to the expressed needs of new teachers while seeking to provide the opportunity for professional development as well.

Evaluation of data for this existing Beginning Teacher Program shows that it has been highly effective. During the first year, 100 percent of beginning teachers in the program (n = 30) were retained in the profession. Second-year data show 97 percent of participants (n = 60) were retained. Ninety-eight percent of third-year participants (n = 78) remained in the profession. Over the three-year period of the program, 95 percent of participants remained in the classroom. All teachers served, except for the five percent who dropped out in their first year of teaching, have continued in the profession.

Collaboration from the onset of the program consisted of involving district personnel in an advisory capacity. Acceptance by principals was sought and gained in order for Help-Line cadre members to be welcomed at building sites of the new teachers to be

helped. In order to separate evaluation and support functions, closer collaboration was not sought.

Model II: A Full Collaboration Model of New Teacher Support: The efforts of the existing Beginning Teacher Program: Help Line described above are being extended into a model of new teacher support that is designed also to be responsive to the context of teaching and to the needs expressed by the new teacher her/himself. Model II differs from the existing program in that it assumes that full collaboration between school district(s) and the university is necessary and that the program can balance support functions with the hierarchical and evaluative functions of schools. Model II, therefore, proposes to include school district personnel from various layers of the district hierarchy, some who are directly involved in evaluation functions. Implementation of this model would involve the collaborative efforts of university and school district personnel, including district principals and other administrators, university resource specialists, on-site support teachers, directors of instruction and other district resource personnel.

Project implementation would rely heavily on new teacher support teams. Each team would consist of the principal or designee, building support teacher, university resource specialist and the new teacher. This team is designed to enable the program to differentiate support at successive stages of the program in accordance with the emerging needs of new teachers. Further, the

team would provide a vehicle to enable activities to be designed, with respect to time, place, and content, so that the new teacher does not feel that the continuity and energy required for his own classroom program is being interfered with. The purpose of this team is to give personal, individualized support to the new teacher and to provide guidance to the project directors that is responsive to new teachers.

Each new teacher would also be assisted by a university specialist in preparing an Individual Professional Plan to delineate professional goals, strategies, and resources. The Individual Professional Plan would allow the teacher to target specific services available in the New Teacher Resource Bank. The New Teacher Resource Bank would include the following:

1. Release Time to be used by the new teacher or a resource person for observations, demonstrations, coaching, co-teaching, visiting resource centers, and related services.
2. A Resource Pool of educators who have been identified as containing specific skills and backgrounds to help the new teacher. These may be mentor teachers, curriculum specialists, recently retired teachers, Directors of Instruction, or university specialists.
3. A Materials Fund Bank available for adapting and developing materials to meet the new teacher's needs.
4. Resource Packets as requested on topics of concern to new teachers.

5. Media Resources, such as educational videos and classroom video taping capabilities are available.

In order to receive personal support, get answers to specific questions or access the resources stated above, a new teacher or member of the New Teacher Support Team could dial the New Teacher Resource Line. This Resource Line would provide access to the project staff who are coordinating these resources.

An important feature of these collaborative efforts would be the Small Group Support System. The purpose of the Small Group Support System would be to provide a source of emotional and personal support to relieve the isolation and stress associated with the first year of teaching. These groups of eight to ten new teachers would be available on alternate weeks and could be led by a university graduate student in counseling with experience in teaching.

In addition, eight, full-day workshops to provide informational and emotional support are recommended. The content of the workshops are to be planned in terms of the expressed needs of the new teachers involved.

Included in the project would be a research component intended to investigate theoretical and applied aspects of collaborative efforts in providing new teacher support services. More specifically, research would be directed towards investigating new teacher preferences in requesting support services, retention rate of new teachers, influence of peers in providing emotional support,

exit surveys of teachers who leave the profession early in their careers, and leadership structures for implementing innovative inservice teacher education strategies.

A third model of new teacher support, drafted but not as yet implemented, had as full partners the university, the school district and the teacher union. Many of the components in Model I and II were also part of this model.

The Debate: Limited or Full Collaboration?: A major issue involves the question of whether new teachers will accept support from persons involved in the hierarchical, evaluative functions of the schools? There is an increased public demand for school districts to provide a "gate-keeping" function aimed at keeping incompetent individuals out of the teaching profession. In addition, assessment procedures are being explored which asks for documentation of teaching performance not only during supervised field experiences but also during the first year(s) of teaching. (Shulman, 1987). An exploratory research project on teacher assessment is in progress at Stanford University under the direction of Lee Shulman. This assessment project combines pen and pencil testing with a portfolio review and assessment center exercises. The portfolio is a collection of lesson plans, video tapes of teaching, student work demonstrating change and other evidence of competent teaching performance taken from preservice coursework, student teaching and internship in the public schools. Three universities are cooperating with the Dayton Public Schools

in Dayton, Ohio in using portfolio assessment. While the jury is still out as to the form and value of portfolio assessment of teacher competence, it serves as another indication of the desire to involve the teacher in assessment and development in the school context where the job is actually carried out in the first years of teaching.

While these efforts are applauded as an improvement over pen and pencil assessments, it may be problematic to associate assessment too closely with new teacher support. Beginning teachers are often reluctant to seek much needed assistance within their school/district, even when available, because of an underlying fear of possible negative evaluation, risk to tenure, and/or the possibility of termination of employment. Therefore, it is possible that a support system separated from the assessment functions can provide aid, improve the beginning teacher's effectiveness and ultimately their retention in the profession.

The question is, therefore, should support functions be carried out collaboratively with school districts and even possibly teacher unions? One of the strengths of collaboration is that decision-making is divided between more people who will be more apt to support the program because they have been involved. There will also be more people in a position to implement the program because more agencies are collaborating. Further, the program might benefit from the different perspectives reflected by the various agencies involved. Last, there might be more likelihood

of obtaining financial support since collaboration is often highly prized by funding agencies.

On the negative side, collaboration often slows a process down simply because when more people are involved, decision-making becomes slower. Also, if any problems evolve between the various agencies, such as district and union problems, the whole process of program implementation could come to a halt. Typically, involvement of various agencies requires that each group be equally represented in the decision-making. Therefore, more money will need to be spend on administrative personnel rather than services directly benefiting new teachers. Further, the political interests of any one group could conflict those of other agencies and with the immediate needs of the new teacher. For example, the various agencies, union, district and university, might have different reasons of their own for selecting cadre members, some reasons having more relevance to providing support to the new teacher than others.

Last, one of the negative sides of collaboration is that districts may be pressured to function as a "gate-keeper", in order to assure the public that they are acting to keep incompetent teachers out of the profession. This role may conflict with their acting as support to new teachers. It is possible that the university, or some non-evaluating agency, can better direct the support functions of new teacher programs with advise from district administrators and teaching unions. In this way these new teacher support programs can extend the university teacher preparation

programs out into the field so that the new teacher feels that they're really cared about and that they have someone to turn to at the university, even after graduation. Beginning teacher support programs can serve as an innovative aegis for a more successful and less traumatic transition into the teaching profession for the new teacher.

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The authors would like to acknowledge the help of a number of California State University, Northridge, educators who helped in the design of Model I, II, and III.